



No.	Author	Date
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	Title	
	2008 Mourning Dove Call-Count Survey	

Abstract: In 2008, the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife (IDFW) participated in the national mourning dove call-count survey coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The IDFW has surveyed mourning doves along the same 15 annual survey routes since 1966. The average number of mourning doves observed along 15 Indiana driving routes was slightly lower in 2008 than in 2007. The average number of doves heard along each route in 2008 (20.3 doves) decreased 7.4% from 2007 (23.1 doves), but this difference was not biologically significant. Indiana's mourning dove breeding population has remained nearly unchanged over the last 10-year period, but has declined significantly (-1.2%) over the long-term study (1966-2008).

Work Plan #: 300FW0BIRD07514

The mourning dove is one of the most widely distributed and abundant birds in North America and has a well-deserved reputation as a superbly challenging game bird. Mourning doves remain our most abundant upland game bird in Indiana and an estimated 15,000 hunters harvested approximately 258,400 doves in 2007. In fact, more doves are harvested in the Midwest than all other game birds combined. Because the species is migratory in nature, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is responsible for its management. State fish and wildlife agencies, in cooperation with the USFWS, conduct an annual survey to monitor changes in mourning dove abundance. Survey data are used to monitor population trends in 3 survey units; the eastern, central, and western management units. Indiana is 1 of 27 states in the Eastern Management Unit participating in the annual surveys. Also, Indiana is 1 of 19 states within the Eastern Management Unit that permits dove hunting. The Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife has cooperated with USFWS since the inception of the Mourning Dove Call-Count Survey in 1966.

Methods

The Office of Migratory Bird Management of the USFWS established 15 Indiana dove call-count

survey routes in 1966. Each route was randomly located and consists of 20 listening points spaced at one mile intervals on secondary roads. Surveys begin $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before sunrise, and are not conducted during rain, or when winds exceeded 12 mph. The number of individual doves heard during a 3-min listening period at each point was recorded. The number of doves seen, whether during the listening period or traveling between points, was also recorded. In 2008, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists surveyed these 15 routes between 20 May and 31 May.

Results

We found that 20.4 doves were heard per survey route during the 2008 survey, while 22.5 doves were heard per survey route during 2007. From the results of Dolton et al 2008, the number of calling doves heard per survey route in 2008 was 7.4% lower than the number heard in 2007, but was not a significant change. Also, there was only an insignificant difference in the number of doves seen along the routes between 2008 and 2007. Over the last 10 year period, the mourning dove breeding population in Indiana has fluctuated, but remained virtually unchanged ($+0.5\%$). However, on the data over the entire long-term study, the breeding population has declined significantly,



1.2% per year, over the last 43 years (Figure 1; Dolton et al 2008).

Discussion

Compared to other states in the Eastern U.S., Hoosier dove hunters continue to enjoy a relative abundance of birds. The number of birds heard per route in 2008 was second only to North Carolina in the Eastern management Unit. Even with seasonal fluctuations, USFWS researchers (Dolton et al 2008) found the number of doves heard along Indiana call-count routes has remained virtually unchanged over the last 10 years (1999-2008). These results signify the fact that our population is healthy and that our current regulations and management approaches are appropriate. The Eastern management Unit, as a whole, has remained even more stable over the last 10 years than Indiana, but Indiana holds a higher index of doves per route. However, over the long-term study (1966-2008), the call count survey has shown a significant decline in the population of mourning doves in both Indiana and the EMU, with Indiana having a much steeper decline over this time period (Figure 1). This steeper decline is most likely attributed to severe weather events, loss of habitat, and changes in grain production across Indiana.

There is no other game bird that can challenge the most experienced wing-shooter and provide the novice with numerous opportunities. Dove hunting provides a great opportunity to introduce youth or new hunters to the sport. However, there must be places available for these hunters to get this experience. Many dove hunters enjoy the managed public dove fields found at some reservoirs and fish and wildlife areas. However, the future of hunting and our upland game bird populations most likely depends upon the commitment of private landowners to provide access to hunters and to provide small game species with adequate habitat. Wildlife incentive programs in the most recent farm bill provide monetary support to landowners willing to implement wildlife-friendly practices on their land. If you would like more information about these programs or would like to enroll your land, please visit your local USDA service center. In addition to federal programs, the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife administers several cost-share programs that provide monetary assistance to landowners willing to improve game bird habitat

on their property. For additional information about these IDFW programs, contact your local district biologist or visit: <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild>

Literature Cited

Dolton, D.D., K. Parker, and R.D. Rau. 2008. Mourning dove population status, 2008. Pages 1-21 *in* Mourning dove, white-winged dove, and band-tailed pigeon population status, 2008. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland. USA.

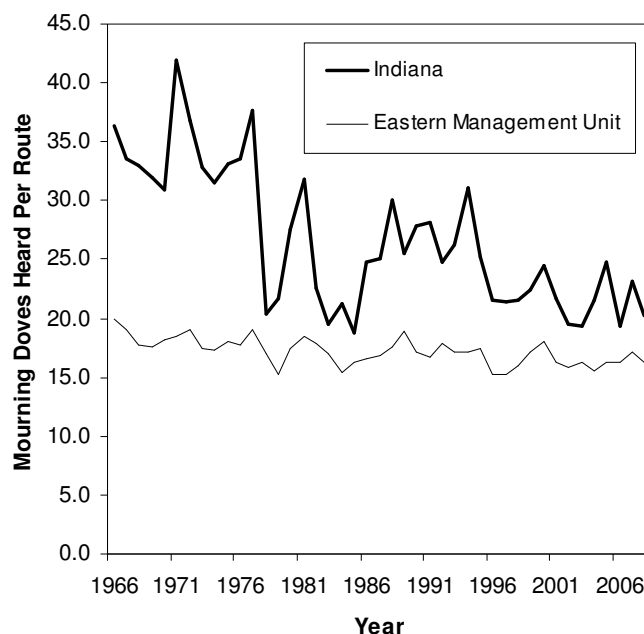


Figure 1. Breeding Population Indices (number heard per route) for mourning dove from the annual Call-Count Survey, 1966-2008 (based on regression model; Dolton et al 2008). Along with indices for Indiana, indices are also shown for the entire Eastern Management Unit (EMU) which includes the states of Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.